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right of a woman to hold property. The patrilineal identification of family and land is incompatible with it. Whatever farm a woman works or controls is regarded as a trust for a son or brother of her husband or father.

The conflict is naturally never so phrased, nor is it ever debated. Yet there are many instances which show behavior, accepted fully as right and just by the local community, which reveal the patrilineal identification. A widow, for instance, remains upon the farm only if the children are beginning to grow up. If they are very young, she returns to her parents and a husband's brother may take the farm. Even if she marries, she and her new husband merely hold the land in trust. The new husband is, graphically, a "stranger to the land."

As a "stranger" he has no right to it. In a village in mid-Clare, to give an example, a "Yank" returned after many years in the United States to his father's farm, from which he and all his brothers had emigrated. His mother, now dead, had married again, and her two children by her second husband still worked the farm. D——, the "Yank," threw the husband out into the road, told him to go home, and took up the land. Later when he gave fortunes to both of the children, the village felt he had made ample amends for the stepfather's years of toil.

Whether or not there is a legally executed will, it is much the same. In Luogh, a son, inheriting a farm upon the death of his mother, allowed her old second husband to stay on with him. He was said to be "very kind to the old man." In Inagh again, though a small farmer, dying, willed the family's farm to his wife and children, a brother on a neighboring farm got most of the land. "He paid her nothing for it. He took bits of it here and there until it was all gone." Whatever protest there is must come from the growing nephews. Inagh makes none.

In matchmaking, too, legal form may be subordinated to

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CHAPTER VIII

Dispersal and Emigration

THE internal reorganization of the family consequent on the marriage of one of their number produces a marked change in the situation of the as yet unprovided-for brothers and sisters. The other members of the family broken up by the marriage of one of their number on the home farm must be provided for elsewhere. They feel themselves entitled to portions, either in the form of dowries to marry into another farm or of some other means of establishing themselves. If such provisions in fact are not made, conflict arises, as we saw in the case of the McDermott murder. A classical case in the Ennis region of Clare was that of an old farmer of substance who married a nineteen-year-old girl when he was eighty. When the birth of a son precipitated a crisis, he had to be protected from his scandalized relatives, sons, and daughters by the police. When he died the following year, he gave a hundred pounds each to the constable who protected him and the priest "plucky enough to marry me." His sons refused to attend his funeral.

Normally, however, the transfer of land and the break-up of the family which worked it is made with the fullest possible provision for the other children. The dowry brought in is utilized to that end, and the savings of a lifetime on the farm have been used. The following observations made by a Land Commission official, himself a small farmer's son

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of situations. For instance, we have already seen that a woman whose son has married and who fails to get along well with the "new woman" may, quite without censure, move into the house of a daughter and share that house with the daughter's husband's father. Several cases came to notice in which women who had relinquished their farms moved in with the dead husband's brothers. 834

A famous joke between a well-loved old priest and his bishop in Clare based on a real incident plays around this last theme. On the occasion of his usual pastoral visit, the bishop congratulated the parish priest on the high moral standard of his parish. He had one reservation to make, however. He was shocked to learn that a couple who had recently moved into the priest's parish were living together openly and were not married. The parish priest caught the twinkle in his bishop's eye, but nevertheless he promised to make an inquiry and take necessary action. Next day he reported that he had learned that the couple were an old man and old woman, brother's wife and sister's husband, who had recently moved into a cottage together. They were both seventy, and had been living in the bishop's own parish for the last ten years. Since the bishop had been so shocked by their taking the house together, the priest said he would send them back and let his lordship deal with the problem as he had been doing before. 834 522

In such cases, obviously, the difference of sex of the house-mates as a danger to morality has disappeared. This agrees with the equation many country people seem to make between the "saintliness" of the old and their emancipation from the flesh.

By the same token, the old person who has already had his or her day of childgetting and childbearing, and yet still persists in manifesting sexual aspirations, is a stock figure of fun. He or she is the butt of endless ridicule and practical joking in the countryside. Again, of course, such 834 522 587

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laughter is best explained as playful censure. For very real censure often breaks out against such a person. It is particularly likely to break out into overt punitive action in cases where old farmers threaten the expectations of their heirs by taking young women as second wives. In fact, the one kind of man or woman of considerable age who does not command respect is this. The countryside finds endless amusement in the theme of May and November. Naturally the matchmaking system does lend itself fairly well to matings between oldish men and young women, since ownership of a farm is the basis for a match.

The most interesting point of inquiry, then, may well be the connection between the sexual status of the family members, as we have described it here, and the standing of the family. The sexual status of the members is a reflection of their capacity for carrying alliance among the other families of the countryside. Can we draw, therefore, a connection between rural familistic norms about sexual behavior and the class structure of the rural community?

We know already that marriage in rural Ireland yields us one clue to the connection. At matchmaking the negotiations between the contracting parties concern the relative standing of each. That standing is at stake. The equivalence of dowry and land are arrived at through a careful enumeration of all the past history and the present material substance of the contracting families. The location of the farm, its livestock, its soil, the reputation and ancestry of the family, all these are compared. Backward places, we remember, do not grow big fortunes. Neither do many other kinds of persons and places.

We are dealing here of course only with one broad class, the country people. Yet within the boundaries of rural life there is much to be learned of the country people's treatment of relative prestige and standing among themselves. There are many behaviors in the activity of the countryside

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182 is only the 'crabbit' person who will sell the land,
602 and 'go to town and drink the money'. Such con-
428 duct is indefensible, and for good reason. It runs counter to every law of kinship and local custom.

182 But in the case of a young widow, a conflict can
589 arise. The countryside recognizes only dimly, if at
428 all, the right of a woman to hold land in her own
593 person. That does not mean she cannot exercise full control and work the land herself, which she often does. Rather, she is regarded as holding it in trust for a brother or a son of her husband or her father. She cannot alienate it from the patrilineal line to which it belongs. The conflict arises because she herself moves between two such lines; her father's and her husband's.

Consequently, a widow remains upon the farm only if her children are growing up. If they are very young she returns to her father's farm, and a husband's brother takes over. If she is childless, she is hardly regarded as having moved out of her
[766] own kindred; she is buried, when she dies, not with her husband but with her father.

182 Even if she marries, she and her new husband
428 merely hold the land in trust. The second husband
587 and his children are 'strangers to the land'. The
593 rightful heir by blood, whose 'name' is on the
578 land, may turn them out. So strong is the identification. The woman gets the place only as a mother of the family's sons. One must remember that I am not speaking of formal title or legal right. They

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may be often quite different and run counter to rural values, breeding strife and forcing the aggrieved to seek redress outside the law.

Here, then, is the new equilibrium in the countryman's social life. The match provides a transition between the generations. Within the family unit, it provides for the establishment of a new nuclear group. It makes room for an essential continuity in which all the members may share and round which all their interests may be centred. Externally, it regathers those whom it must disperse. Round this dispersal, the web of kinship can be built. In the persons of the old people moved one step toward death, and in the identifications round them, 'descent' and 'blood' and 'the name on the land', the emotions of human groups can find their nexus.

In this movement, household, land, adult status, economic control, all move together. Marriage is a turning point round which rural life hinges. It is a structural centre. Every tie between human beings is modified. Then, in a new form, they can crystallize again—to give scope for movement, to allow continuities, to habituate human beings to new social places.

The whole of this movement takes place within a frame of human sentiments, ambitions and desires. Emotion lends its force. Convention, habit and the sanctions of public opinion and private anger keep the bounds and punish transgression. Public honour and self-satisfaction reward conformity.